Ethel M. Albert

same caste. There are some short Tutsi and some tall Hutu. This makes no difference, for physical indices are not needed to distinguish Tutsi from Hutu. Recognition is based on their manner, their way of speaking, and their behaviour. Everybody agrees that the Tutsi and the Tutsikazi are born more intelligent—or, at least, cleverer—than the Hutu. This can be seen, it is said, because the Tutsi make the Hutu work for them without necessarily giving anything in return. There is general agreement that the Tutsi have a pronounced tendency to avarice and that old Tutsikazi are the worst misers in the world. Further, the Tutsi are most accomplished rhetoricians. The Hutu mutter and the Hutukazi lisp, and they are incapable of a good lie or of an elegant impromptu oration which seem second nature to Tutsi. Here, however, a contrast must be noted between Tutsi men and women: the boys are taught to speak well, the girls to be silent except to offer polite, evasive phrases.

It is believed that the Tutsi are physically and psychologically more delicate than the Hutu. They are not made, as the Hutu are, to work in the fields, to carry heavy burdens on their heads, to eat the solid, heavy food of the farmers. The Hutu pity the Tutsi when the latter are obliged by the government to do manual labour. True delicacy is shown by the *imfura*, literally the first born, more generally any person of very high birth, whose character and conduct constitute the model of nobility. The *imfura*, it is said, are so delicate that they take only liquid nourishment, especially milk and beer. All the Rundi know perfectly well that the Tutsi and their wives eat beef, cereals and vegetables. They are, however, so much taken by the myth of a liquid diet for superiors that even those who have been servants in the homes of Europeans—by definition, superiors—insist that the European diet is "liquid", that it does not give the strength needed for manual labour. Otherwise stated, persons of superior status do not work; their inferiors work for them. Elegance and dignity are joined together in everything that relates to the *imfura*. They wear beautiful clothing and much jewellery; they walk slowly and in front of others, or they are carried in a litter (although today the well-to-do prefer to travel by automobile); they speak softly, they never show their emotions; they are always discreet, they never discuss important matters in public. In fact, the dignity of well-born Tutsi and Tutsikazi seems sometimes to be primarily a frightening coldness and reserve. To respect the *imfura* and to fear them amounts to much the same thing.

It is necessary to stay in Burundi for a long time to see behind the stereotypes of the castes. In brief, it is assumed that the Tutsi

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and Tutsikazi are tall, dignified and elegant; they know how to give the impression of great control, of intelligence and of refinement. Hutu and Hutukazi are plainly farmers, short and sturdy, clumsy, made for work, and they seem to be vulgar, stupid, incapable of controlling their emotions or of speaking well. Nothing has so far been said of the poor Twa: like the Rundi, we have forgotten them. The Twa, pariahs, are, say the Rundi, without shame. They eat anything, they employ bad language. It is necessary to pay them for the pots their women make, for no Rundi will participate in economic exchanges of gifts and services or in social relations with them. We shall see further on that the stereotypes of superiors and inferiors according to caste can be used also in describing all other superior-inferior relationships.

To complete the description of the hierarchical order of Rundi society, it is necessary to include the kinship system. The familial hierarchy has the same pattern as the social hierarchy. All benefactors are called *umuvyeyi*, parent. The *mwami* is like a benevolent father, it is said, who likes the Rundi, his children. The nursing mother is the symbol of feminine generosity. The best way to thank a benefactress is by means of the formula: I am a nursing child at your generous breasts, or alternatively: you are to me as a freshened cow. The herders sometimes argue about the relative superiority of women and cows; both sources of milk appear to have their partisans.

Whatever the position of an individual in the social hierarchy, he will also have his place in the familial hierarchy. The head of a patrilineage, prince or pariah, is at the summit of the familial hierarchy. He is the *mukuru*, the highest, the oldest by rank, though not necessarily by chronological age. He speaks first, he drinks first, he must be respected and obeyed by his brothers, his sons, and the women of the patrilineage. The household consisting of a man and his wife and children is the smallest independent unit of Rundi society. There, the father of the family is *nyene rugo*, the master of his household. His children and his wife—if he is polygamous, his wives—owe him respect and obedience. Addressed in the familiar by his superiors, the father of the family addresses his inferiors in the familiar, in his capacity as a patriarch of almost absolute power. His wife kneels before him when she offers him his gourd of beer, and his child kneels before him to receive his blessing. (The Old Testament comes inevitably to mind at the sight.) Sons receive a part of their father's property as their inheritence not later than the time they receive a wife but are all their lives subjugated to their father's authority. The father chooses one of his

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Women of Burundi: A Study of Social Values

Many children represent happiness for both men and women in Burundi. Women adore babies, and a pregnant Rundikazi is a happy woman. Only very rarely do women go into the bush to look for the medicines that cause miscarriage. (For unwed mothers, the motivation is obviously different). It is not possible to find a Rundikazi, even a great-grandmother, who will admit that she is *umukechuru*, a woman beyond the age of child-bearing. A woman who is sterile, or who has had only one child and never again conceived believes that she has been cursed by her paternal aunt or is the victim of witchcraft. Some women produce Gargantuas, children they have carried for 11 months, or 15 months or even two years. The Rundi are by no means ignorant of the biological cause and signs of pregnancy.[16] They simply refuse to acknowledge any other alternative conditions than pregnancy or nursing mother. It is also not for a lack of knowledge of the biological facts that men have no interest in the biological paternity of their children. If a brother or cousin is the biological father, this is no more than is to be expected. If it is a stranger who has got his wife with child, he has made the husband a free gift. The father does not reproach his wife if she has conceived during one of his long absences from home, nor is he at all prejudiced against those of his children who have been fathered by other men, when the time comes to choose his heritor.[17]

Among the princes and the Tutsi of the very good patrilineages, the mother does not take care of the children except to nurse them. A governess, a woman from a family only slightly lower in the social scale than that of the child, looks after it. At present, the wealthy send their school-age children to European schools far from home. In the past, young adolescents were sent to be brought up by princes and princesses. Among the commoners, an infant is with its mother day and night. He is carried nude on her naked back and nursed at the first whimper. The mother plays with her baby, especially with her son, tickles it everywhere, and talks baby talk to it. She adores her baby, but the moment she finds herself pregnant again, she immediately weans her child. The child, who is probably between 18 and 24 months old, is abruptly separated from his mother. He is handed over to a brother, a sister, a grandmother, to anyone who will have him. Sometimes, the grandmother or a grown-up sister will permit a newly-weaned child to suck at the dry breast, but soon the child is put on the ground to crawl about, to play, and to learn that life is hard. It is not surprising that the mortality rate of newly-weaned children is very high.

If there has been a divorce, the departing wife takes with her